

VZCZCXRO4480
PP RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH
DE RUEHKO #6292/01 3032233
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 302233Z OCT 06
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7877
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/USDOJ WASHDC PRIORITY
RULSDMK/USDOT WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J5//
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI
RHMFIUU/HQ PACAF HICKAM AFB HI//CC/PA//
RHMFIUU/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA//J5/JO21//
RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA
RUAYJAA/COMPATWING ONE KAMI SEYA JA
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 1140
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 8617
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 2007
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 8284
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 9674
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4698
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 0809
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2378

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 10 TOKYO 006292

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR E, P, EB, EAP/J, EAP/P, EAP/PD, PA
WHITE HOUSE/NSC/NEC; JUSTICE FOR STU CHEMTOB IN ANTI-TRUST DIVISION;
TREASURY/OASIA/IMI/JAPAN; DEPT PASS USTR/PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
SECDEF FOR JCS-J-5/JAPAN,
DASD/ISA/EAPR/JAPAN; DEPT PASS ELECTRONICALLY TO USDA
FAS/ITP FOR SCHROETER; PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR;
CINCPAC FLT/PA/ COMNAVFORJAPAN/PA.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 10/30/06

INDEX:

- (1) Poll: 51% oppose reinstatement of LDP rebels
- (2) Let's regain Okinawa prefectural politics; High expectations for candidate Itokazu
- (3) Special report on US Marines' training exercises in Okinawa: Battlefields inside US base fences; Antiterror warfare on white sandy beach
- (4) Okinawa Marines engaged in mop-up operations in Iraq war for Al-Qaeda suspect
- (5) Second nuke test would constitute a regional contingency: Masuzoe
- (6) Declassified US document: Washington refused to notify Japan of coolant discharge by nuclear powered warship
- (7) Update report by Japanese NGO on Iraqi children's incidence of cancer: 30% of pharmaceuticals in short supply with dwindling international aid
- (8) Editorial -- Kono statement on military comfort women: A survey and a review both necessary

ARTICLES:

- (1) Poll: 51% oppose reinstatement of LDP rebels

According to a poll conducted by the Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 51% of respondents opposed the Liberal Democratic Party's idea of reinstating former its members, who had left the party as they opposed then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's postal privatization bill, while 33% favored it. More than 50% gave positive evaluation to the one-month-old cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, citing his visits to China and South Korea. The Abe administration seems to have made a fairly good start, but if it fails to handle the issue of whether to let the former rebels rejoin the party, on which the views are divided in the party, the issue will likely become an obstacle for Abe's management of the government in the future.

Among the supporters of the LDP, 47% objected to the reinstatement of the former rebels, while 38% supported it. Among those supporting the New Komeito, which is the junior coalition party of the LDP, 65% opposed the reinstatement, with 31% favoring it. Among the supporters of the main opposition party Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan), those who opposed the LDP letting them to return reached 71%, while only 22% supported the move. Among those who are not affiliated with any party, 47% opposed and 32% supported the move.

Based on the thinking that the LDP will not win the Upper House election next summer if it cannot gain broad cooperation, the LDP members in the House of Councillors have strongly urged the party leadership to allow the former rebels to rejoin as early as possible. Prime Minister Abe ordered Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa to study the matter. However, Koizumi and other members have maintained a cautious stance. Opposition parties have criticized the move, noting, "The reinstatement of the former rebels

TOKYO 00006292 002 OF 010

is aimed at winning next summer's Upper House election."

Appearing on a Fuji TV talk show yesterday, Nakagawa stated on conditions for letting the rebels to return to the party:

"They should promise to support the prime minister's policies and to never take anti-party actions in order to gain the understanding of the public. They must take litmus tests."

Asked about how to treat the freshman lawmakers who represent the same electoral districts as the postal rebels, Nakagawa clearly responded: "The party leadership will protect all of them responsibly."

The LDP executive intends to carry out full-scale coordination on the matter after the Fukushima gubernatorial elections in Fukushima on Nov. 12 and in Okinawa on the Nov. 19. They will closely watch the trend of public opinion, while advocating the fundamental principle.

According to the poll, 53% gave positive assessment to Abe cabinet, while 28% did not give positive evaluation. Some 38% cited Abe's trips to Beijing and Seoul as the reason for their positive assessment, followed by 28% who cited his cabinet's response to North Korea's nuclear test, and 17% appreciated the cabinet's effort for educational reform.

Regarding the reasons for not appreciating the Abe cabinet, 32% responded that the government lacked efforts for fiscal reconstruction and economic policies, followed by 18% saying that the government's response to the North's nuclear test was not enough, and 16% citing the appointments of cabinet members and LDP executives as unsatisfactory.

(2) Let's regain Okinawa prefectural politics; High expectations for candidate Itokazu

By Ginowan City Mayor Yoichi Iha

I am determined to let the governments of Japan and the United States know about Okinawan people's intention on the US military bases issue by supporting Keiko Itokazu, a candidate backed jointly by five opposition parties, to win the Nov. 19 gubernatorial election.

The US military has been using the land expropriated from Okinawan people 61 years ago because Japan lost the Battle of Okinawa. Okinawan residents have said "no" to this situation, but the Japanese government has forced US bases on Okinawa by creating various laws.

Even after ten years have passed since the governments of Japan and the United States agreed to relocate the US Marine Corps Futenma Air Station from the center of Ginowan City, the Futenma base has remained in the same place. Two years ago, a US military helicopter crashed on the grounds of Okinawa International University. It goes without saying that the US military, which has continued its drills in the airspace above the urban area, and the Japanese government that has allowed the US military to do so, have no sense of responsibility.

TOKYO 00006292 003 OF 010

Since the current prefectural government of Gov. Kenichi Inamine has blindly served the central government, it has not credibility to pursue the responsibility of Tokyo and Washington. I'm sure that it will be impossible for Mr. Hirokazu Nakaima, the candidate backed by the LDP and New Komeito who has vowed to take over the policy of the current prefectural, to resolve this issue.

The US administration has announced that the US Marines in Okinawa will be relocated to Guam as part of the realignment of US forces in Japan. In view of US military strategy, it is unnecessary now to construct a new base facility in the Henoko district. If Ms. Itokazu wins the election, she will push forward to have Futenma base immediately closed and returned to Japan.

While serving at the prefectural assembly for seven years, I worked together with Ms. Itokazu to oppose the construction of a new US base, as well as the reclamation of Awase tideland flat. We also worked together to build a children's hospital. She is the best candidate to serve as Okinawa governor to improve the livelihoods of prefectural residents and protect the peace and environment of the prefecture.

We can feel at ease when we entrust the administration of the prefecture to her. I intend to support her all my might.

(3) Special report on US Marines' training exercises in Okinawa: Battlefields inside US base fences; Antiterror warfare on white sandy beach

ASAHI (Page 37) (Full)
October 29, 2006

Shunichi Kawabata, Asahi Shimbun

Soldiers in camouflaged fatigues jumped out of landing rafts. A fierce shootout broke out on an outlying island... Last month, the US Marine Corps conducted large-scale training exercises in Japan's southernmost island prefecture of Okinawa for special operations. The US military is planning to realign its troop deployment on Okinawa, and its presence on the island prefecture would become a major issue in its upcoming gubernatorial election slated for this November. I saw their training exercises inside the fences of bases and ranges that crowd the small island.

Ahead of local communities and sugarcane fields were US servicemen. They were in the Kin Blue Beach Training Area in the town of Kin, Okinawa Prefecture. Under the nets looking like trees, there were soldiers with their machineguns at the ready. They belong to the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (31MEU).

Across the gate were a white sandy beach and a deep-blue sea. The training area occupies an area of 38 hectares on the cape of Kin

jutting out into the sea. Local communities regard this area as a potential resort spot. However, the US military is not yet expected to return the area.

There were 18 large rubber rafts on the beach. They were landing crafts for combat troops and scouts. Some 100 fully armed soldiers were grouped into eight in each craft pulling out to sea. Their landing drill set in. The first contingent of eight soldiers swam to the shore and scouted around. All other rafts closed in, and the soldiers jumped out on the shore and hid themselves with their

TOKYO 00006292 004 OF 010

submarine guns at the ready.

The drill was intended to infiltrate into the enemy's land and detain a key figure. This training was in anticipation of an antiterror war.

Late at night, Marine troops as terrorists held one of the barracks in Camp Schwab, which is 14 kilometers northeast of Kin and is located on the cape of Henoko in the island prefecture's northern coastal city of Nago, where a V-shaped pair of airstrips is planned to be built as an alternative for Futenma airfield in the city of Ginowan. Soldiers landed on the nearby beach under cover of darkness, and they approached the barrack with their night-vision goggles on.

The soldiers suddenly fired blanks in the dark and then broke into the barrack. Enemy troops fell down one after another with their shouts. On the nearby level ground, there were several helicopters from Futenma airfield and a medical team on standby. The choppers took off with wounded soldiers on board.

"It's a very difficult task to infiltrate into the enemy's land from the sea," one of 31MEU's officers said. The Marines were conducting training exercises at a location not so far from local communities in anticipation of fierce battles overseas.

Iejima, an isle outlying off the northern part of Okinawa's main island, is where the US military's Iejima auxiliary airfield is located on its western side. This airfield suddenly became a battlefield.

A number of choppers came flying and circled over the airfield as if to watch the ground. The choppers made an assault landing with soldiers on board. Soldiers as enemy troops fought back from behind buildings or hollows. Their machineguns barked with casings bursting out. I knew they were firing blanks. Even so, I was filled with the fear of gunfire.

The heliborne troopers brought the whole area under their control. Their commander told them to check the bodies of fallen enemy troops. It was about 15 minutes' battle. Staff Sgt. Joshua Gutierrez says he experienced actual warfare in Kosovo. "Basically," he said, "we must be quick in landing and leaving."

Next, a group of soldiers in blue protective suits appeared. They were training for detecting biochemical weapons or radioactive substances and identifying contaminants. Their appearance tells that they are ready to combat around the world, anticipating worst-case situations.

The next day, two Harrier jets came flying to Iejima from Iwakuni Marine Air Station in Yamaguchi Prefecture for training purposes. The Harrier is a vertical/short takeoff and landing or V/STOL fighter attacker that backs up MEU troops from the sky. The Harrier pads in the airfield were demarcated with a white line in the shape of an assault landing craft's deck. The Harriers slowly circles and halted right over the pads. Their turned down their jet nozzles and touched down. Their roaring sounds could be heard even through earplugs.

According to a local resident, cows jumped over of a fence when the pads were installed there. Capt. Torrey Delpizzo (TN: phonetic), a Harrier pilot, said: "I don't want make the local residents feel

bad. I'm happy that I can work on this beautiful island."

Nagahiro Kuniyoshi, a former reporter for the Okinawa Times, has covered US military bases since the 1960s. The US Marines in Okinawa, Kuniyoshi says, used to conduct large-scale landing drills before Okinawa's return to Japan, with landing crafts filling up the shore and soldiers passing through public roads and hills to cross the island. In recent years, the Okinawa Marines have downscaled their maneuvers along with actual combats. "They can do that training in Guam, and there's no reason that they must do such training in Okinawa," Kuniyoshi noted.

Japan and the United States have finalized their report on their intergovernmental talks over the realignment of US forces in Japan, incorporating an agreement to redeploy some of the Okinawa-based Marine troops to Guam or elsewhere by 2014. However, the US Marine Corps will retain almost all of its combat and heliborne troops on Okinawa. "Even after their redeployment (to Guam), there would be no big change in their field training," a Defense Agency official says.

(4) Okinawa Marines engaged in mop-up operations in Iraq war for Al-Qaeda suspect

ASAHI (Page 37) (Full)
October 29, 2006

Capt. Burrell Palmer, public affairs officer of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (31MEU) in Okinawa, said: "Japanese people really don't know what we're doing. They're only looking at base relocation or Guam relocation."

The US Marine Corps has been intensifying its training exercises for special operations since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The Marine officer says 31MEU covers the Korean Peninsula and the Asia-Pacific region. However, its troops were sent to the Iraq war from 2004 through the spring of 2005. He explains that they took part in mop-up operations with the Army's special troops for Al Qaeda's Zargawi, who died in June this year.

"In the spring of 2005, we could have arrested him if it had been one hour earlier," the officer said.

A total of 50 31MEU troops died in a battle in Fallujah, Iraq, or in a helicopter crash in that country. Okinawa Marines were training for escaping from a crashed helicopter in a swimming pool of Camp Hansen, a US military base located across the town of Kin.

(5) Second nuke test would constitute a regional contingency:
Masuzoe

NIOHN KEIZAI (Page 2) (Full)
October 26, 2006

The following is an interview with Yoichi Masuzoe, chairman of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's policy board in the House of Councillors, on North Korea's nuclear test:

The reason why Pyongyang went ahead with a nuclear test is that it wanted to draw the United States to the negotiating table. The leaders might be thinking that the ultimate means to achieve that purpose is possession of a nuclear arsenal. This time as well, they're probably thinking to themselves that their country has

became an object of attention in the world with their nuclear test, and in that sense it was successful. Japan's financial sanctions against North Korea are working well to a considerable extent. Kim Jong Il is calling for Japan to stop such sanctions in order to keep his regime going. However, there's no political reason for him to stop testing nuclear bombs.

Although we all want North Korea to become a democracy, this ideal

is too high to attain for now. First of all, the Japanese government should think of how to prevent North Korea from exploding another nuclear weapon. Indeed, the six-party talks no longer are functioning. But there's no other choice except for this framework to ease the current state of tension.

Pyongyang has a blind eye when it comes to China, South Korea, and Japan. It's possible for the United States to carry out pinpoint airstrikes in North Korea. But it's difficult to conduct two-front operations in Iraq and North Korea. The United States can't easily go ahead, when thinking of occupying and administering North Korea after that and also when thinking of paving the way to the Korean Peninsula's reunification. However, we'll have to take action as soon as we sensed that North Korea is likely to be capable of loading its missiles with nuclear warheads.

If there's a second nuclear test, it should be recognized as a regional contingency under the Law Concerning Measures to Ensure Japan's Peace and Security in the Event of Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan. It would not be easy for the Diet to create a special measures law or a permanent law. If Japan conducts cargo inspections beyond its capability, it may cause trouble for the United States and other countries. Rather than that, it would be better for Japan to support them in the rear.

It would never be in the interests of Japan to argue about going nuclear. It's all in vain—just like arguing about what would happen if Godzilla came and crushed Tokyo Tower under his feet. It would be better for LDP Policy Council Chairman Shoichi Nakagawa to think about something more realistic—like how to rescue people in the event of an earthquake. That's his job.

(6) Declassified US document: Washington refused to notify Japan of coolant discharge by nuclear powered warship

AKAHATA (Pages 1 and 4) (Abridged slightly)
October 29, 2006

Even if a US nuclear-powered warship discharged primary coolant in a Japanese port, the US government would not report it to the Japanese government, according to a declassified US government document. In May 1968, an abnormally high level of radioactivity was detected in waters near the USS Swordfish while it was moored in Sasebo Harbor in Nagasaki Prefecture. The above was in response to the Japanese government's query about whether or not the US would report such an accident to Japan.

US nuclear-powered warships have reportedly entered Japanese ports on over 1,200 occasions. The incident has deepened suspicion that US naval vessels have discharged primary coolant in Japanese ports without the knowledge of the Japanese government and the Japanese public. It also exposed risks associated with the planned deployment of a US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier at Yokosuka Naval Base.

The document in question is a cable sent on October 22, 1968, to US
TOKYO 00006292 007 OF 010

Secretary of State Dean Rusk from US Ambassador to Japan U. Alexis

SIPDIS

Johnson. It was among copies of a series of declassified US government documents obtained in the US by International affairs analyst Shoji Niihara.

In the wake of the Swordfish incident, the Foreign Ministry released on October 22, 1968, a memorandum of understanding on radioactivity associated with US nuclear vessels docked at Japanese ports, signed by Foreign Minister Takeo Miki and Ambassador Johnson. The memorandum indicated that a US nuclear vessel (anchored at a Japanese port) could discharge first-stage coolant as an exceptional case. The telegram discussed what had been discussed between Miki and Johnson immediately before they signed the memorandum.

According to it, assuming that Japan would allow discharge of primary coolant in its port as an exceptional case, Miki asked in the event coolant was discharged, would the United States

subsequently report it to the Japanese government?

Memorandum read Johnson's response: "I told him I could say only what was in the memorandum. This question had not been put to Washington, and if it were, I felt certain answer would be 'no.' I said I thought it best for the Japanese government to back down from this territory."

This conversation indicated that the US was fixated on secret discharge of first-stage coolant. Japan and the US have not since released any agreements denying the memorandum. Although the US government has explained that discharging primary coolant in Japanese ports was prohibited, its credibility is highly questionable.

(Commentary)

On May 6, 1968, radioactivity 10 to 20 times higher than the normal level was detected in the vicinity of the USS Swordfish, moored in the harbor of Sasebo, causing a major sensation. International affairs analyst Shoji Niihara has obtained copies of a series of declassified US documents vividly portraying subsequent Japan-US talks on the incident.

Although the US did not ascribe the abnormally high level of radioactivity to discharge by the Swordfish, the Atomic Energy Commission of Japan released a report on May 29, 1968, saying that it was extremely regrettable that the commission was not able to determine the cause scientifically due to a lack of data from the US. The report also urged the Japanese government to ensure in order to dispel public anxieties that nuclear vessels docked at Japanese port would not discharge first-stage coolant from their nuclear reactor.

This prompted the Japanese government to begin talks with the US. But on June 1, 1968, Ambassador Johnson sent a cable to Secretary Rusk reading: "Technically and operationally speaking, it is not possible for nuclear-powered vessels to never discharge (coolant) while docked in Japanese ports." Consequently, Foreign Minister Miki and Ambassador Johnson signed the memorandum of understanding on Oct. 22 allowing coolant discharge in Japanese ports as exceptional cases.

The Japanese government remained concerned to the end. Miki, in his talks with Johnson before releasing their memorandum, asked that in the event primary coolant was discharged in a Japanese harbor,

TOKYO 00006292 008 OF 010

whether the US government would report it to Japan. Furthermore, Johnson's cable to Rusk on Oct. 22 read: "Miki also asked if he could tell the Japanese government for certain that in the event (primary coolant) was discharged, the US would notify Japan about (the fact) and offer cooperation." But Johnson rejected both requests.

The US has kept insisting on allowing US vessels to secretly discharge coolant in Japanese ports. As was officially agreed upon with the US, Japanese ports accommodating to US nuclear vessels are constantly exposed to radioactive contamination.

On Sept. 14 this year, radioactive substances that do not exist in nature were detected in seawater in Yokosuka Nava Base after the USS Honolulu, a nuclear-powered submarine, had left. The US has ruled out the submarine as the cause without presenting any concrete evidence.

On April 17, the US government also released a fact sheet on US nuclear powered warship safety in connection with the planned deployment of a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to Yokosuka. The report read: "U.S. policy prohibits discharge of radioactive liquids, including primary coolant, from US nuclear powered warships within 12 miles of shore, including in Japanese ports." But the US governments is required to offer a clear explanation consistent with the Miki-Johnson memorandum allowing discharge of primary coolant.

(7) Update report by Japanese NGO on Iraqi children's incidence of

cancer: 30% of pharmaceuticals in short supply with dwindling international aid

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 28) (Slightly abridged)
October 20, 2006

The Japan Iraq Medical Net (JIM-NET), a nongovernmental organization engaged in medical assistance to children in Iraq who are cancer patients, held a press conference in Tokyo on Oct. 19, in which JIM-NET Representative Minoru Kamata, a physician, and others reported on the current state of treatment for children with cancer. Even after the end of the Iraq War, the country remains in turmoil. What is happening to such cancer patients?

JIM-NET was established by seven domestic organizations in 2004. Because of worsened security conditions in Iraq, it opened an office in Jordan, from which it sends pharmaceuticals to four hospitals with facilities capable of treating children with cancer in Iraq.

199 children added to new cancer patients in a half-year

At the press conference, JIM-NET released a report showing the results of a meeting on Sept. 20 in Jordan with five pediatricians working in Iraq. According to the report, during the six-month period March through August of this year, a total of 199 children were found to suffering from cancer at four hospitals in Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul.

80% of acute leukemia patients recovering

Of those patients, 121 suffered acute lymphocytic leukemia. According to an analysis of the treatment given to them, some 80% or 89 children attained a complete remission. If remission continues five years from now, they will be regarded as fully recovered from lymphocytic leukemia and unlikely to have a relapse. At the time

TOKYO 00006292 009 OF 010

when JIM-NET began medical assistance, the complete remission rate was no more than 40%. Representative Kamata highlighted the effect of assistance this way: "If the rate rises another 10%, it will be the same level as those of the advanced countries. This result is excellent, given the severe situation there."

Meanwhile, a number of tasks cropped up. Of the 121 patients, 15 died. One of them was discovered in critical condition with the advancement of illness because the patient was forced to stay home because of danger outside. Nine of them could not have received treatment because of poverty or other reasons even though they were diagnosed as suffering this or that illness."

Pharmaceuticals were also in severely short supply. The shortage in supply of medicine reached nearly 30% in Baghdad. During the period from 2003 through 2004, Iraq received medical supplies from NGOs outside the country, but since the start of this year, JIM-NET has become the only supplier.

Kamata revealed: "The social status of local doctors is high, so they tend to be the targets of terrorism. Some of them are said to have received intimidating letters. Because going out is dangerous, some doctors go to hospital only a few days a week or some stay at hospital."

Impact of depleted uranium bombs indicated

There are indications that depleted uranium weapons used by the US and other countries' forces during the Gulf War in 1991 and the Iraq War are linked to the occurrence of cancer among children, but there are no scientific data to support the suspicions.

The US has so far denied any damage to health caused by depleted uranium ammunition, but Toshi Inoshita, a doctor at the Tokushima Prefectural Kaifu Hospital who had engaged in medical assistance as a JIM-NET medical coordinator in Jordan, commented: "I have a feeling that depleted uranium bombs have had some effect. Cancer is found in every country, and it's not accurate to say that all children suffering from cancer in Iraq got sick because of depleted

uranium weapons, but the use of depleted uranium no doubt contributes to the occurrence of cancer. Assuming that the cancer rate rises 5% a year, the number of children suffering cancer might double over those with such sicknesses in the Gulf War."

Inoshita continued: "Proving the linkage between depleted uranium ammunition and cancer is not a priority task for JIM-NET, so such agencies as the World Health Organization need to conduct a proper survey."

JIM-NET Secretariat Chief Maki Sato said, "(Local) doctors stay in hellholes in Iraq, and somehow give treatment to children with the medicines we provide, though the quantity is insufficient, and try to protect the children. Given this, we must continue our help to them." Sato calls for donations. A contact phone number is 0263-46-4218.

(8) Editorial -- Kono statement on military comfort women: A survey and a review both necessary

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
October 30, 2006

Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Hakubun Shimomura's recent remarks

TOKYO 00006292 010 OF 010

referring to the need to review Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono's statement concerning the issue of military comfort women, released in 1993, is causing a stir. The opposition parties are gearing up to pursue the government as representing "discord in the cabinet," but we don't think his remarks were problematic.

The remarks in question emerged in a speech given by Shimomura in Tokyo. In the remarks, Shimomura, noting that this was his personal opinion, stated: "We need to study facts more carefully and to take time to collect objective and scientific knowledge so that we can think of the issue." His remarks are quite natural as a politician. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe does not regard Shimomura's remarks as a problem. In fact, Abe noted, "I, too, made various remarks in my capacity as a lawmaker when serving as deputy chief cabinet secretary."

SIPDIS

The opposition parties point to a discrepancy between "Shimomura's remarks" and Prime Minister Abe's Diet replies. True, Abe reiterated at a plenary session of the Upper House and a meeting of the Lower House Budget Committee that his cabinet follows the Kono statement.

However, Abe stated at the Lower House Budget Committee meeting: "After hearing of the then chief cabinet secretary's statement, I wondered why there was a discrepancy with what was reported at the time." "On the question of whether there was conclusive evidence for 'enforcement in a narrow sense,' at that point I stated that there were many questions. Later, this argument shifted to the one on 'enforcement in a broad sense.'" Abe added.

Abe's replies touched on the heart of the problem the Kono statement has. The then deputy chief cabinet secretary referred to by Abe was Nobuo Ishihara, and "enforcement in a narrow sense" meant transportation of people for forced labor by the military and police authorities.

The Kono statement admitted to "transportation of women for forced labor as military comfort women or sex slaves." But no conclusive evidence about such transportation was found in official documents collected by Japan. However, only based on the results of an interview with former military comfort women conducted in Seoul immediately before the release of the statement, Kono noted that it was a fact that there had been "transportation of women for forced labor as sex slaves". This episode was afterwards revealed by Ishihara in his testimony. Later, segments of the media, as is widely known, switched the argument point to "enforcement in a broad sense."

It is strange for the cabinet to be shackled by the government view

that was formed based on incorrect perception of the facts. A review of the government's view is necessary by carrying out a survey. The government has turned around its view in the past, as well. For example, on the question of the prime minister's visits to Yasukuni Shrine, the government view announced in 1980 was this: "such visits are highly suspected of being unconstitutional," but that view was modified in 1985 to the one viewing official visits to Yasukuni Shrine as constitutional.

Given all this, we hope to see a review of the Kono statement conducted at the parliamentary level with experts so that a right course will be shown.

SCHIEFFER